

Message Text

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SUBJ: AGR: DROUGHT, ORGANIZATION AND RESPONSES OF GOH

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 3224

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE PRESS REPORTS A JULY 28 MEETING OF THE AGRICULTURAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE (COCO) AND CONCERNED MINISTERS ON DROUGHT PROBLEM. TWO COMMISSIONS WERE FORMED: ONE TO DEAL WITH FARM PRODUCTION AND THE OTHER WITH RURAL FOOD DISTRIBUTION AND UNEMPLOYMENT. SOURCES OF ASSISTANCE WERE OUTLINED, AND SOME ADDITIONAL TECHNICAL FACTORS IDENTIFIED. END SUMMARY.

1. AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION COMMISSION IS TO BE HEADED BY LIC. EFRAIN DIAZ ARRIVILLAGA, VICE-MINISTER OF NATURAL RESOURCES. ITS KEY RESPONSIBILITY IS TO PUSH CORN AND SORGHUM PRODUCTION WITH ASSISTANCE FROM COCO, THE AGRARIAN INSTITUTE, AND THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT BANK. IT HAS AN INITIAL BUDGET OF 1.5 MILLION DOLLARS.

2. A RURAL FOOD AND WORK PROGRAM COMMITTEE IS TO BE HEADED BY ARTURO CORLETO, SECRETARY OF ECONOMIC PLANNING. THIS GROUP IS RESPONSIBLE FOR FINDING WAYS OF MAINTAINING REAL INCOME THROUGH THE PROVISION OF EMPLOYMENT IN SMALL

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INFRASTRUCTURE CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE. CONCERN IS

THAT EVEN IF SUFFICIENT FOODSTUFFS ARE AVAILABLE, SMALL FARMER AND RURAL RESIDENT INCOME HAVE FALLEN SO DRASTICALLY THAT THIS GROUP WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO BUY FOOD. THE MINISTERS OF ECONOMY, TREASURY AND THE CENTRAL BANK ARE MEMBERS. THE INITIAL BUDGET IS 1.5 MILLION DOLLARS.

3. EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE IS EXPECTED FROM U.S. PL 480. JAPAN IS TO PROVIDE 500 THOUSAND DOLLARS FOR BASIC GRAIN, ESPECIALLY RICE. IMPORTS FROM COSTA RICA, MEXICO AND THE U.S. ARE ENROUTE. ARGENTINA HAS OFFERED A BARTER OF CORN FOR HONDURAN WOOD. VENEZUELA HAS OFFERED CREDITS FOR RICE SALES.

4. THE PRODUCTION PROGRAM IS DIRECTED TOWARD 48,000 MANZANAS OF "TECHNIFIED" LAND. (ONE MANZANA : 1.7 ACRES). THIS ACREAGE PRODUCES THE COMMERCIAL CORN CROP. AND ADDITIONAL 114,000 MANZANAS IS "NON-TECHNIFIED" (SUBSISTENCE PLOTS) AND NORMALLY NOT INCLUDED IN THE PRODUCTION STATISTICS. THE SUBSISTENCE FARMERS ARE EQUALLY HARD HIT BY THE DROUGHT AND FOR LACK OF SELF SUFFICIENCY, CONSTITUTE A NEW ELEMENT OF INTERNAL DEMAND. FOR GEOGRAPHIC AND CULTURAL REASONS, THEY WILL BE MOST DIFFICULT TO REACH WITH WORK AND FOOD PROGRAM.

5. REGIONALLY, THE NORTH-WEST OF HONDURAS HAS HAD SUFFICIENT RAIN. THE SOUTH-WEST IS BADLY HIT, AND NORMAL RAIN CONDITIONS ARE MARGINAL FOR CORN. ABOUT TWO THOUSAND QUINTALES OF SORGHUM SEED HAVE BEEN PURCHASED FROM NICARAGUA FOR PLANTING THERE. IN THE CENTRAL AREA CORN IS TO BE PLANTED IN OLANCHO TO THE DEGREE PERMITTED BY RAIN, LEAVING SOME AREAS FOR LATER PLANTING OF BEANS. IN THE NORTH SECTION OF HONDURAS, CORN IS THE BEST CROP AS THE HUMIDITY IS TOO HIGH FOR BEANS. IN PARAISO, MIXED CROPS OF BEANS, CORN AND SORGHUM WILL BE ATTEMPTED.

6. GOH RECOGNIZES THAT ITS EFFORTS TO STIMULATE AN INTERMEDIATE PLANTING AT THIS LATE DATE WILL NOT

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SOLVE THE BASIC GRAINS PROBLEM OF REQUIREMENTS FOR 1975/1976. EVEN IF RAINS COME AND THE CROP IS SUCCESSFUL, THE TOTAL PRODUCTION WILL BE SHORT OF NORMAL NEEDS BEFORE THE HARVEST OF AUGUST, 1976.

7. COMMENT: ORGANIZATIONAL PROGRESS IS APPARENT, AND THE GOH FINANCIAL INPUT INCREASED FROM 2.5 TO 3.0 MILLION DOLLARS. STATISTICAL DATA ARE AND

PROBABLY WILL REMAIN THIN, CONFUSING THE ACCURATE
IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM. PRESS REPORTS OF CASES
OF DEATH BY STARVATION ARE BELIEVABLE, BUT UNCONFIRMED.
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